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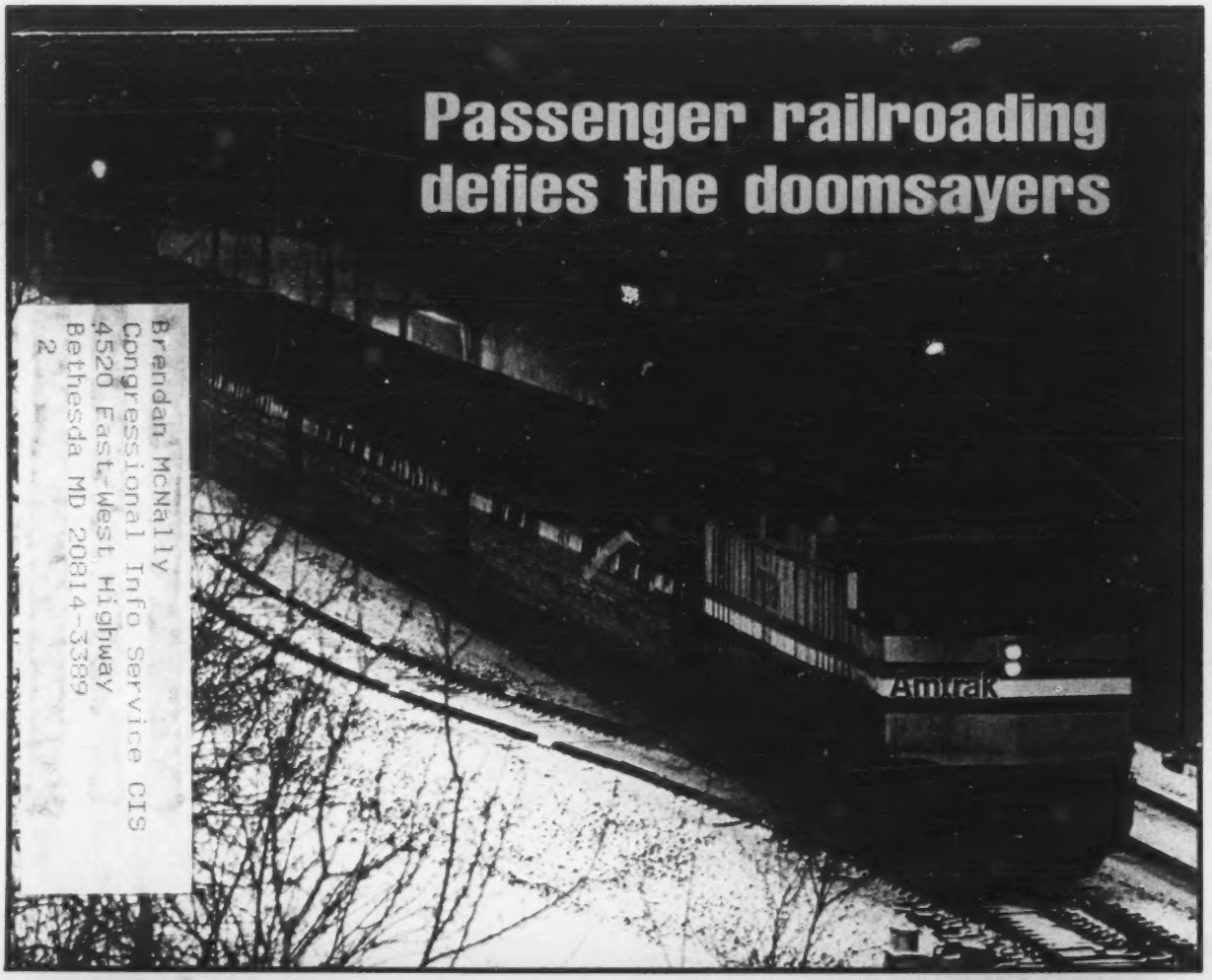
January 1989

Railway Age

...for the new age of railways and rail transit



Passenger railroading defies the doomsayers

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Conrail sets the pace in mechanized m/w

How '89 shapes up for equipment builders

Union Pacific gets a fix on filters

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INSIDE

How much buying power?

Suppliers and other trend-watchers trying to get a fix on the size of the railway market in 1989 will find some useful guidelines—maybe even a few surprises—in this issue of *Railway Age*.

LUTHER S. MILLER

Our updated forecasts for new freight equipment (p. 26) call for capital outlays totaling around $2 billion. That's based on the expectation that close to 30,000 new freight cars will be added to the fleet at a cost of around $40,000 apiece, and that more than 700 locomotives will come off the lines of General Motors and General Electric at around $1.3 million a copy.

Add to that the substantial car and locomotive rebuild programs that are under way, and to *that* the more than $2 billion in capital funds earmarked for improvements to track, signals and communications, and other fixed facilities; then to all of the above add the billions of dollars that the freight railroads spend each year for materials and supplies that are charged as operating, not capital, expenses, and you begin to get some idea of this industry's buying power.

But that is only part of the story. The passenger railroads—intercity, commuter, rapid transit, and light rail—will have capital budgets this year equalling or exceeding those of the freight carriers; they also will spend additional billions on operating materials and supplies. This lesser-known railway market, which is fragmented and for which no central data bank is maintained, is examined in our annual passenger review and outlook feature (p. 31).

Conrail is one of the biggest spenders among the freight railroads. This year Conrail has a capital budget of around a half-billion dollars, and more than half of that will go for track improvements.

Conrail's track record is, in every way, an extraordinary one.

At one time, recalls Benjamin J. Gordon, the railroad's chief engineering officer, Conrail had 8,000 miles of slow orders. But Conrail rolled into 1989 with only 250 miles of slow-ordered track, mostly on minor branch lines.

The journey from 8,000 miles of slow orders to 250 was not fast, it was not easy, it was not cheap. At one time Conrail was laying over 1,000 miles of rail and installing close to 5 million ties a year.

Maintenance is now down to ordinary levels—but what is far from ordinary in Conrail's engineering department is the fleet of high-tech track machines. Four of these—a right-of-way boring machine, a continuous action tamper, a track stabilizer, and a tie change-out machine—are the subjects of a story in this issue (p. 41).

Two of them are particularly noteworthy, because they have received little if any publicity so far, though each represents a milestone in mechanized m/w. One is the right-of-way boring machine, now the only one of its kind in North America. This $750,000 machine just about paid for itself on its first job, the Boston & Albany clearance project, and bigger and more rewarding tasks lie ahead as Conrail prepares to explore and catalog its ballast and subgrade conditions, system-wide.

The other is a tie change-out machine, of which Conrail now has the center section with front and rear sections under design. By midsummer, Conrail will have something that does not now exist anywhere in the world—a selective tie change-out machine.

Railway Age
...for the new age of railways and rail transit

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BPA RPRA Railroad Public Relations Association

MARKET OUTLOOK

Equipment

Amtrak: Ordered an additional 50 coaches from Bombardier at a cost of $50 million, thus exercising its first option under an agreement with the builder signed last June. Under that agreement, Amtrak placed a base order for 50 cars with two options for future purchase of an additional 50 cars each. The new order consists of 42 passenger coaches and eight food service cars. Delivery will take place between November 1989 and March 1990.

GE Capital Railcar Services: Is rebuilding 250 boxcars at its Texarkana, Ark., facility and lining them with a laminate of AZDEL, an impact-resistant white plastic that resists punctures, cracks, and chips.

Norfolk Southern: Placed a $40 million order with Trinity Industries for 1,000 open top hopper cars for the haulage of coal, with deliveries to begin in the second half of 1989.

Southern Pacific: Is acquiring 150 70-foot, 100-ton-capacity center beam Gunderson-built flatcars for the movement of lumber from the Pacific Northwest to eastern destinations.

XTRA: Is acquiring 500 45-foot-by-110-inch dry van trailers from Dorsey Trailers. Delivery of the high cube units is to be completed this month.

Facilities

Canadian National: Will build a new, $19 million (Canadian) intermodal terminal near Vancouver to replace two existing operations downtown which are nearing capacity. The new terminal, to be built east of Thornton Yard at Port Mann, is to open in 1991.

Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority: Awarded a $14 million contract to Union Switch & Signal for the supply of wayside cab signaling equipment for the eastern half of GCRTA's heavy rail transit network. Similar equipment is already in use between Union Terminal and Windemere, eastern terminal point of the GCRTA network.

New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority: Approved a 1989 capital budget of $1.4 billion for the New York City Transit Authority and the Long Island and Metro-North railroads. Most of the money will go for track, signaling and communications, power supply, and station improvements.

PATH: Awarded a $1.3-million contract to Kaiser Engineers Group for engineering services for installation of a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. The system, which has a total cost of $20 million, will permit central control of power supply for Newark-Manhattan trains and for environmental and security needs at all PATH stations.

Southern Pacific: Has expanded its Armourdale Yard at Kansas City at a cost of $2.6 million. The project, to be completed in December, involved expenditure of $1.5 million for addition of more than two miles of track and 28 switches in the classification yard itself, and $1.1 million for construction of a two-track, 60-car-capacity intermodal facility. Further expansion of the intermodal terminal is planned for 1989.

Revenue freight carloadings

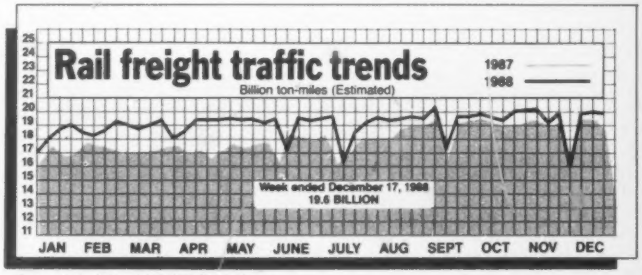
Commodity	Dec. 17 week	Dec. 10 week	Dec. 3 week	Nov. 26 week
Grain	29,234	29,654	28,878	19,729
Other farm products	4,289	4,471	3,929	3,637
Metallic ores	19,372	23,780	21,516	19,290
Coal	127,399	132,530	128,763	110,302
Crushed stone, gravel and sand	13,203	15,728	15,541	11,199
Nonmetallic minerals	9,257	9,524	10,483	7,517
Grain mill products	10,848	11,333	11,430	9,396
Food and kindred products	10,927	11,372	11,676	9,102
Primary forest products	9,941	10,559	10,146	6,872
Lumber and wood products except furniture	6,972	7,048	7,358	5,533
Pulp, paper and allied products	11,201	11,314	12,704	11,151
Chemicals and allied products	28,007	28,750	30,808	22,833
Petroleum products	5,402	5,618	5,549	4,205
Stone, clay and glass products	9,589	11,112	11,250	8,290
Coke	5,998	5,687	5,866	5,484
Metals and products	9,483	9,255	10,089	9,165
Motor vehicles and equipment	24,581	24,248	23,730	16,023
Waste and scrap materials	9,216	9,784	9,512	6,780
Forwarder and shipper assn. traffic	2,042	2,130	2,007	1,686
All other carloads	89,550	89,240	86,385	68,782
Total Cars Loaded	**436,551**	**453,137**	**447,626**	**356,976**
% change from previous year	2.2	2.0	1.1	2.8
Estimated revenue ton-miles (billions)	19.6	20.0	19.9	16.0
% change from previous year	1.7	1.7	0.9	2.6

Total:	1988	1987	% change
50 weeks	963.8	911.0	5.8

Piggyback loadings

	Dec. 10 week	Dec. 3 week	Nov. 26 week	Nov. 19 week
Trailers/containers	119,683	111,991	91,630	119,010

Cumulative total, 49 weeks		% change from 1987
Trailers/containers	5,399,044	3.6


Rail freight traffic trends
Billion ton-miles (Estimated)
1987
1988
Week ended December 17, 1988
19.6 BILLION
JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUNE JULY AUG SEPT OCT NOV DEC

Source: Association of American Railroads

Gary J. Benson

Ridership on the Chicago area's Metra trains rose to 260,000 trips a day in 1988, a 6% increase attributed to good service and aggressive marketing.

Defying the doomsayers

Harsh words from Washington and austerity funding levels have not stopped the growth of passenger railroads. Ridership is up, old systems are expanding, and new lines are being built.

By LUTHER S. MILLER, Editor

During their years in the White House, neither Jimmy Carter nor Ronald Reagan showed a marked affection for passenger trains. Each in his own way tried to put trains in their place, and that place was nowhere near the beginning of the federal assistance line.

President Carter particularly hated the notion of federal aid to rapid transit, which he viewed as old-fashioned and obsolete, and he cited Washington's Metrorail system as an example of money down the tube. President Reagan's hostility was more impartial: He tried to cut Amtrak's funding to zero, and he espoused drastic cuts in assistance to urban and suburban trains.

But the trains refused to die, and as the Carter-Reagan years begin to fade into history, passenger railroading is flourishing as it has seldom flourished in the postwar era.

• **A multi-billion-dollar market.** There is compelling evidence of this in the marketplace. Passenger railroad agencies this year will place orders for 800 to 900 new cars, about $1 billion worth of business. They already have firm plans for ordering 1,700 to 2,500 more cars during the 1990-1994 period. They have 537 cars on order and undelivered. They accepted delivery of 575 cars last year. And that only begins to tell the story of passenger railroads' impact on the railway market.

New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority alone has a 1989 capital budget of $1.4 billion for improvements to the rolling stock, signaling and communications, track, and stations of its three operating subsidiaries, the New York City Transit Authority, the Long Island Rail Road, and Metro-North Commuter Railroad. Additional billions will be invested by other cities and states modernizing and expanding older systems and building new ones. All together, the passenger railroads' capital investment this year is likely to exceed that of all of the Class I freight railroads.

Even more compelling evidence of the vitality of passenger railroading is found at the farebox.

• **Rail ridership gains.** Transportation Policy Associates estimates that Amtrak and commuter rail ridership rose by 3.2% in the first nine months of 1988. By comparison, the number of intercity passengers carried by all modes—air, bus, and rail—was up by only one-tenth of 1%. Air ridership actually dropped a fraction of a point, and bus ridership, which has fallen 12% since 1980, continued to decline.

Amtrak in fiscal 1988 carried 21.5 million people, topping its previous ridership record of 21.4 million established in the oil-crisis year of 1979. Passenger miles rose for the sixth straight year, to a new high of 5.7 billion, up 9% over 1987. Amtrak's cost recovery ratio climbed to 69%, two percentage points ahead of the railroad's target, perhaps the highest ratio of revenues-to-expenses to be found among major railroad passenger systems anywhere in the world. This means that Amtrak has required less and less in operating subsidies: Federal funding dropped from $895 million in 1986 to $602 million in 1987 and to $581 million in 1988. (It does not mean, however, that Amtrak, even as it continues to drive costs down and revenues up, does not need additional federal funding. To keep pace with soaring demand, Amtrak estimates that it needs to spend $1 billion in the next decade on new equipment, and it cannot raise all of that money internally or from the kind of innovative financing which last year led to the order of 100 new coaches from Bombardier at a cost of $100 million.)

A spot check by *Railway Age* revealed these ridership trends elsewhere:

—Washington Metrorail, the nation's showpiece rapid transit line, late in 1988 was carrying more than 509,000 riders a day, up 7% over 1987.

—Average weekday ridership on Bay Area Rapid Transit trains rose to 205,000 in December, up 5% over the 195,000 daily riders BART was carrying a year ago.

—The San Diego Trolley last year averaged 30,000 riders a day, an increase of more than 10% over 1987.

—Ridership on Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority commuter trains rose to 70,000 a day, compared with 52,000 a year earlier. MBTA commuter rail patronage over a five year period has increased

by 100%. Officials attribute the increases to a combination of factors—a bustling economy and better equipment and service. MBTA recently acquired 60 coaches from Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm (MBB) and 40 from Bombardier, and this year plans to acquire 75 double-decker coaches. Worldwide proposals for the double-decker fleet are now under study.

—PATCO's Lindenwold Line, which connects New Jersey with Philadelphia and has long been regarded as a model of no-frills transit, carried an estimated 11,175,000 riders in calendar 1988, up slightly from 1987. Average weekday ridership topped 41,000.

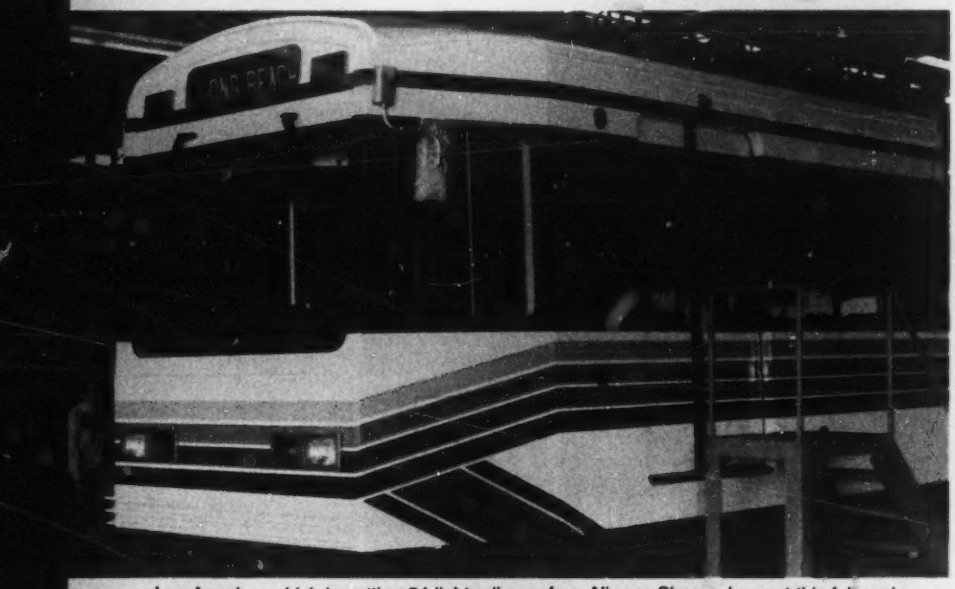
—Chicago Transit Authority's rapid transit ridership held steady at about 588,000 riders on an average weekday, despite service problems arising from slow-ordered track. But ridership on CTA's newest line, linking the Loop with O'Hare International Airport, rose substantially. About 7,000 riders a day boarded CTA trains at O'Hare last year, compared with 6,000 a day in 1987. CTA does not routinely make exit counts, but surveys have indicated that ridership to the airport from downtown is greater than in the other direction since many people start business trips from the Loop, then return on weekends to suburban destinations.

—The Chicago area's Metra suburban trains racked up about 260,000 passenger trips a day in 1988, an increase of 6% over 1987. Metra trains operate in a growth area, they are aggressively marketed, and additional parking space is attracting new business. About $6.3 million was invested in parking lots in 1988, and another $6.5 million will be spent on parking this year.

—The first, eight-mile segment of the Baltimore Metro was living up to pre-opening projections, with 55,000 weekday passengers.

—The 15-mile light rail line of Tri-Met in Portland, Ore., another newcomer, continued to be counted among the success stories with average weekday ridership of 19,000, in line with projections. Late last year Tri-Met was beginning to experience overload problems during peak hours.

That was generally the picture around the country, with one exception—the New York City area, where some passenger lines reported either a decline in growth or an actual drop in patronage, though for reasons that seemed to have very little to do with railroading itself.



Los Angeles, which is getting 54 light rail cars from Nippon Sharyo, has put this full-scale model of the front quarter of an LRV on public display.

● **Wall Street woes affect transit.** The Wall Street crash of late 1987, while it did not affect employment in the New York area generally, nonetheless caused a 3% loss of jobs in the financial, insurance, and real estate businesses—businesses whose workers tend to live in commuter-train territory.

Among New York area passenger carriers, Metro-North appeared to be the least affected, though it fell far short of anticipated growth last year. Metro-North's estimated 1988 rider count of 54,922, 000 was about one million ahead of the previous year; in the two prior years Metro-North reported increases of 2.5 million (1987) and 2.1 million (1986). Metro-North believes the lack of adequate parking has also deterred riders and has embarked on a $20 million program to increase parking spaces.

Harder hit was the Long Island Rail Road, whose average weekday ridership dropped from 273,000 in the fall of 1987 to 271,300 in the fall of 1988.

The New York City Transit Authority held even with about 3.6 million riders a day; toward the end of the year, ridership was rising.

PATH, which had carried a record 58.2 million riders across the Hudson River in 1987, dropped to 57.2 million in 1988, with average weekday ridership declining from 207,000 to 202,000. PATH attributed the decline not only to the loss of jobs in the lower Manhattan area it serves but also to the increase of jobs on the New Jersey side of the Hudson.

NJ Transit officials blamed Wall Street's doldrums for a 5.4% decline in ridership. In the preceding four years, train ridership had increased by 40% and NJ Transit had anticipated a 5% increase in 1988. NJ Transit has also been plagued by a poor on-time record. Improved service is expected when the $48 million overhaul of 230 Arrow 3 electric cars, approved in December, is completed.

● **Extensions and new starts.** The first big event of the new year will be the Jan. 9 inauguration of the nation's newest commuter service, the 67-mile operation of Tri-County Commuter Rail over CSX track linking Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, and West Palm Beach. UTDC supplied 18 bi-levels for the service.

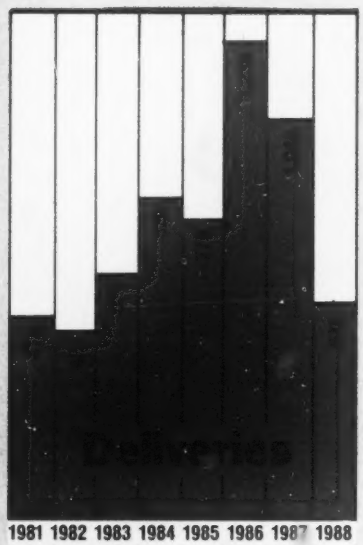
The year ahead will be a busy one for builders and planners in other parts of the country.

Existing systems are expanding. Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) is ready to embark on a $1.7 billion program calling for 33.1 miles of new track, ten new stations, and a new maintenance yard. BART will be extended from West Pittsburg in Contra Costa County to Castro Valley/Dublin, Irvington, and Warm Springs in Alameda County, and from Daly City south to San Francisco's International Airport.

In Boston, studies are under way that could culminate in a $400 million project to extend service from South Station along the Old Colony Line to southeastern Massachusetts. Financing of the local share should be no problem: Massachusetts in 1988 approved a $3.1 billion transportation bond issue with $838 million of the proceeds earmarked for MBTA.

Chicago is moving ahead with plans for a

Passenger-car market at a glance



These cars were delivered in 1988:

Purchaser	No. of cars	Type	Builder
Alaska Railroad	8	Intercity	Daewoo
Amtrak	1	Intercity prototype	Budd-Amtrak
Boston (MBTA)	33	Commuter	Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm
	50	Rapid transit	UTDC, Inc.
Galveston	3	Light rail	Miner Railcar
Miami (Tri-Rail)	18	Commuter	UTDC, Inc.
NJ Transit Rail Operations	23	Commuter	Bombardier
	22*	Commuter	Morrison-Knudsen
New York (NYCTA)	89	Rapid transit	Kawasaki
	95	Rapid transit	Westinghouse Amrail
San Diego (MTDB)	3	Light rail	Siemens-Duewag
San Francisco (BART)	45	Rapid transit	Soferval
Santa Clara County	18	Light rail	UTDC, Inc.
Toronto (GO Transit)	38	Commuter	UTDC, Inc.
Toronto (TTC)	60	Rapid transit	UTDC, Inc.
	37	Light rail	UTDC, Inc.
Washington (WMATA)	32	Rapid transit	Breda
Total	**575**		

*Original self-propelled Arrow I cars, converted to push-pull coaches.

Work goes forward on this undelivered backlog:

Purchaser	No. of cars	Type	Builder
Amtrak	100	Intercity	Bombardier
Boston (MBTA)	56	Commuter	Bombardier
	2	Rapid transit	UTDC, Inc.
Galveston	1	Light rail	Miner Railcar
Los Angeles (LACTC)	54	Light rail	Nippon Sharyo
Los Angeles (SCRTD)	30	Rapid transit	Breda
New York (NYCTA)	11	Rapid transit	Kawasaki
New York (LIRR)	10	Prototype double-deck commuter	Toyku Car
San Diego (MTDB)	38	Light rail	Siemens Duewag
San Francisco (BART)	100	Rapid transit	Soferval
Toronto (GO Transit)	85	Commuter	UTDC, Inc.
Toronto (TTC)	36	Rapid transit	UTDC, Inc.
	14	Light rail	UTDC, Inc.
Total	**537**		

Orders likely to develop in 1989:

Purchaser	No. of cars	Type
Baltimore (MTA)	35-45	Light rail
Baltimore (MARC)	15-25	Commuter
Boston (MBTA)	75	Commuter
	100	Rapid transit
Chicago (Metra)	16	Commuter
Chicago (CTA)	200	Rapid transit
Los Angeles (SCRTD)	42	Rapid transit
NJ Transit Rail Operations	50-75	Commuter
New York (NYCTA)	36	Prototype rapid transit
New York (Metro-North)	48	Commuter
N. Virginia (NVTC)	38	Commuter
Portland (Tri-Met)	10	Light rail
Sacramento	6-10	Light rail
Toronto (TTC)	41	Light rail
Washington (WMATA)	110-140	Rapid transit
Total	**822-901**	

The five year (1990-1994) outlook:

Purchaser	No. of cars	Type
Baltimore (MTA)	0-20	Light rail
Baltimore (MARC)	15-50	Commuter
Boston (MBTA)	50-200	Commuter
	150-185	Rapid transit
Buffalo (NFTA)	6	Light rail
Calgary	11	Light rail
Chicago (Metra)	41-297	Commuter
Chicago (CTA)	0-150	Rapid transit
Los Angeles (LACTC)	39-60	Light rail
Los Angeles (SCRTD)	0-18	Rapid transit
New York (NYCTA)	1,000	Rapid transit
New York (Metro-North)	46-72	Commuter
Portland (Tri-Met)	10-32	Light rail
Sacramento	51	Light rail
San Diego (MTDB)	12-49	Light rail
San Francisco (Caltrans)	10-15	Commuter
San Francisco (MUNI)	24	Light rail
St. Louis	31	Light rail
Toronto (GO Transit)	40-60	Commuter
Toronto (TTC)	86	Rapid transit
Vancouver (BC Transit)	10-20	Light rail
Virginia Beach/Norfolk (Tidewater Transportation District)	14	Light rail
Washington (WMATA)	90-100	Rapid transit
Total	**1,736-2,551**	

double-track, nine mile line that will extend rapid transit service to the city's Southwest Side and to Midway Airport. Estimated cost: $496 million.

Baltimore is to start construction this spring on a new section of its Metro subway, Section C, a 1.5 mile line.

In San Jose, construction is under way on the southern half of the 20-mile Guadalupe Corridor Light Rail Project.

San Diego Trolley this year will complete an 11.2 mile addition to its system.

There's also activity on the new-start front.

In Los Angeles County, 40 miles of light rail are under construction and four miles of heavy Metro Rail are being built in downtown Los Angeles. For one of its light rail projects, the Norwalk-El Segundo line, the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission last year opted for automated LRT.

Maryland's Mass Transit Administration has won a go-ahead to build a 27 mile, $290 million LRT line in Baltimore's Central Corridor.

The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission is far advanced with plans to initiate commuter service on two lines radiating out of Washington—a 55 mile line to Fredericksburg, Va., and a 33 mile line to Manassas, Va. These services will require eight locomotives and 38 cars.

This month, the Bi-State Development Agency will begin final engineering and design of the first, 18 mile phase of St. Louis Metro Link, a light rail line that will run from East St. Louis, Ill, through downtown St. Louis and on to Lambert International Airport. Bi-State late last year received a first installment of $150 million from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration and expects total federal funding of $287.7 million.

Other light rail systems are in the early planning stages. In Minneapolis, the Hennepin County Commissioners last summer voted to proceed with a plan for a first stage 29 mile system estimated to cost $497 million in 1988 dollars. In Virginia Beach, Va., the Tidewater Transportation District Commission is leaning toward a decision to build a 17.7 mile, $102 million LRT line, using 16 miles of existing Norfolk Southern right-of-way to link Virginia Beach with Norfolk.

Miami Beach continues to study the feasibility of a light rail line connecting the resort area with the hotels and convention facilities of downtown Miami.

In Las Vegas, Nev., magnetically levitated trains are on the way to getting their first U.S. test as work continues on a $60 million, 1.3 mile people mover that is being supplied by Magnetic Transit of America, Inc. It will connect downtown Las Vegas with a convention center/sports complex. (The Las Vegas line is modeled after the M-Bahn system now under test in West Berlin. On Dec. 19, the Berlin line was involved in an accident during a manual test operation. Magnetic Transit America issued a statement pointing out that "the accident was caused by human error and not by technical failure" and that "the Berlin M-Bahn has demonstrated an excellent safety record under automatic operation.")

Ridership trends

Amtrak and commuter roads

Year	Passengers (millions)
1980	300.2
1981	288.6
1982	278.4
1983	280.9
1984	286.9
1985	295.1
1986	323.2
1987	331.7
1988*	342.3

*Estimated — Transportation Policy Associates

A number of cities, meanwhile, are looking at a novel use for light rail that is being put to the test in Galveston, Tex. Last summer, Galveston, seeking to revive its sagging commercial district and also to provide an added attraction for tourists, opened a 4.7 mile trolley line looping through the city. Miner Railcar Services, Inc. custom-built four self-propelled cars for the line; they resemble the 1900-1910 vintage Portland, Ore., cars.

• High speed plans on a slow track. Talk continued last year—and there will be more of it this year—of building high-speed rail lines in busy traffic corridors. For the immediate future, prospects are dim that any high speed project will get beyond the talking stage, through planners are optimistic for action toward the middle or late '90s.

Farthest ahead is the Florida High Speed Rail Transportation Commission, which last year selected TGV of Florida and the High Speed Rail Corp. as qualified applicants for a franchise to build and operate a system linking Miami, Orlando, and Tampa. The two competing proposals are under study, and Florida does not expect to award a franchise before 1991 at the earliest. Florida has also asked for proposals for a maglev line in Orange County, home of Disney World. Responses are due March 2.

Interest in high speed passenger rail is also strong in Texas, and last year a $700,000 contract was awarded to a consulting team to study ridership potential in the Houston-Dallas-San Antonio corridor.

High speed in the commonly accepted sense of the term is not what Amtrak has in mind for the Boston-New York segment of the Northeast Corridor—but both Amtrak and the Coalition of Northeastern Governors want higher speeds on the curve-ridden line between these two cities, and it was toward this end that Amtrak tested Canadian LRC, French Turboliner, and Spanish Talgo trains in the Corridor last year. Final reports on these tests are expected to be in the hands of decision-makers early this year. A CONEG spokesman has said that as many as 50 cars for the service might be ordered during 1989, although Amtrak is putting no additional equipment on its official projection list until it sees where the money is coming from. ANF Industrie, which hopes to see its Turboliners placed on this line, estimates that running time between New York and Boston can be reduced to three hours (from the present four hours and 20 minutes) for an outlay of $200 million for rolling stock and $172.5 million for track and signaling improvements.

• Controlling car costs. With passenger railcars now priced at an average of $1.2 million each, buyers are looking for ways both to control costs and improve the product.

The Urban Mass Transportation Administration, which since its inception has assisted in the purchase of some 7,000 cars, last year awarded $800,000 in technical study grants to four transit systems to develop specification and bid packages for lower priced cars. UMTA later will award a capital grant to the system "that has most effectively achieved the goal of cost containment."

The technical study grants went to the Atlanta Regional Commission, in cooperation with the Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority, $208,000; NJ Transit, $200,000; Chicago's Metra system, $200,000; and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, $192,000.

A more efficient car is the goal of the New York City Transit Authority, which has recently replaced or rebuilt most of its car fleet and will soon be in the market for a new generation of cars which it plans to acquire at the rate of 200 a year. NYCTA this year will place orders with competitive builders for 36 prototype cars, all with a.c. traction. From this program NYCTA hopes that its new generation car will emerge. ■